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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 14 MARCH 1980 • No 4016 • 30p



"Road to the North" a wood engraving by Nora S. Unwin. One of 250
prints in "Shall We Join The Ladies?" a collection of works by women
artists. See also page 288.

Aleksandr Blok and his Russia

Frances Yates on Nostradamus

French writers in their letters:

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Proust, Céline

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Japan at the V & A;
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of a "true Russian writer", whom Blok conceived to be "a man marked by fate; he is put into the world to lay bare his own soul before the spiritually hungry." (As Gumpilev once wrote, "Usually," post gives people his works. Blok gives his very self.") Blok continued, "nowhere is literature so vital as it is in Russia... nowhere else does the word pass into life and become bread or stone as it does in our country..."

The "weakness" that Blok believed he must overcome, when he wrote these words in 1908, was the impulse to mere lyricism; and the loneliness it imposed must be ended "by the rhythms of real life, by passion, hard work." He told Stanislavsky he would dedicate his life to "the theme of Russia (and, in particular, the question of the intelligentsia and the people)". That was a question which in various forms would preoccupy him until he died.

Looking back on the years between 1905 and 1917 Blok claimed that his path had been the right one. It was a period that brought much unhappiness in his personal life. Lyuba had become increasingly caught up in the theatre, but Blok doubted her vocation; she worked with Meyerhold whose art he found it hard to appreciate—"talented acrobats around an empty space". There were two ecstatic interludes—one, in 1906-07, when he was swept away by the same Volokhovs and the same 1914 when he fell for "Carnation", the singer Dolmas. But his "double", who must have seemed even more his true self, was a wanderer at night—in the wet snow—helplessly trusting his senses, the moon, shelterless, bowed, weary, in despair about everything.

The "homelessness" of the twentieth century weighed upon him. He sought relief in heavy drinking and wild nights with unknown women. Happiness had slipped away from him. Lyuba matching his own infidelities. (Her child by an unidentified actor Blok accepted joyfully and was greatly upset by his death after a few days.) The period for which he had long secretly wished "was evidently to be granted Blok.

Yet these were the years in which he was bracing himself to his full responsibilities as a poet. He must give bread and not a stone to the Russian people; by communicating his own inner moral vision. At the heart of Blok's difficulty lay the divide between the intelligentsia and the masses. He knew himself, as Blok's grandson, to be inescapably part of the intelligentsia; many regarded him as its spokesman, its true conscience. But he was looking for surer foundations than those the intelligentsia were trying to build on after the failure of 1905. Klyuyev, the peasant poet, felt out his own place and lectured him on the perils of being a "foreigner", corrupted by "all those Fancies and Germanies". Blok knew that the values of his own class were alien to the people, and he saw that the Revolution when it came might well destroy inherited culture. Herzen had anticipated him: "You are sorry for the old civilization? So am I, but the masses are not." In the summer of 1917 Blok was moments when Blok hated the intelligentsia (the more so because of the bonds he felt with them). He accepted that the people could lose patience and hang them: "to clean the rubbish from the mind of the country".

Those are reckless words, and perhaps it is over this question that Dr. Pym—so scrupulously fair in her appraisal of Blok—once bears on him too lightly. He was reconciled to the loss of "Meynling, palaces, pictures, books" because the imagination of man can create these again. It seemed to him there was a "terrible truth" in "Bolshevism", though by "Bolshevism" he meant an elemental, even anarchic force symbolized in *The Twelve* by the Red Guards who place under the protection of Christ the elegant form: "a return to the music" that made sense of history, the overthrow of a civilization that repelled him; the rot which he felt he and his class had long deserved.

Blok's awareness of the growing crisis from 1914 onwards had been shared by the Merezhkovskys. It was from Dmitry that he borrowed in 1915 the term *odichaniye*, "going savage" to describe the condition of Russia under the stress of war. His horror of continuing the war led him to support

the Bolsheviks following Lenin's Decree of Peace. But the Merezhkovskys and most of his friends and associates could not follow Blok down this road, and *The Twelve* outraged them.

Blok committed himself, at first with only a few other writers and artists, wholeheartedly to the new order. He paid dearly for his convictions, in ostracism by former friends, and in the endless and often futile servitude on committees for which he was conscripted. Now he notes in his journal that life had become "horrifying, monstrous, senseless" (December, 1918); the "spirit of music" had taken flight from the Revolution (May, 1919); and in the year of his death he made a last poignant defence of the poet's right to a "secret freedom" (Pushkin's phrase). Literature, he could see, was being suffocated by the new bureaucracy. In these years of the cold and darkness which Blok had foreseen in a poem completed before the war, he is greatly to be respected for his devotion to duty, his attempts to preserve the culture of the past for a public yet to be educated, and his many kindnesses and interventions to save lives and to help even former adversaries to a pitance. But it is impossible not to ask, with so many who had once loved him, had Blok made a deadly mistake? Did he allow himself to interpret the Revolution too much in terms of his own personal needs, his hunger for perdition?

"I am an artist," he wrote in 1918, "consequently, not a liberal!" This is the dilemma that Lionel Trilling was to explore in *The Liberal Imagination*, and it is still with us. If Blok in 1918 and 1919 denounced too readily the values of liberal humanism, it can at least be said in his defence that he had his eyes resolutely on the future: "Man is the future", he once wrote to a young Georgian poet, who seems too much in need of it. To identify Blok's poetry with nostalgia, Dr. Pym tends a little to minimize the significance of his Pushkin speech in February 1921—the plea for the artist's freedom of which she has been long secretly wished "was evidently to be granted Blok.

To Khodasevich (a speaker on the same occasion) his speech had a ring "of profound tragedy, in part, it may be, of contrition"; and it would seem that the audience, gradually warming to him, interpreted it that way. But Dr. Pym offers a perspective which would give another meaning to his final years of frustration and weariness. The supreme expression of his great and simple idea of a Third Force, a sound from some other shore beyond all the warring class and clamour of this agonizing and terrible world.

And in the Pushkin speech he spoke of the free morning of the green garden beyond the dark corridor... Khodasevich, whose understanding of the Revolution was much nearer to that of the Merezhkovskys, yet pays tribute to the "truthfulness and simplicity" which he always associated with memories of Blok. In April 1917 Blok had noted down: "By the will of fate (not by my own weak strength) I am an artist, i.e. a witness." For the feel of life in those disastrous times there could be no more selective witness. But even as Blok wrote this, there occurred to him the question: "Does democracy need the artist?"

Ultimately it is not Blok's political judgment that counts today. What matters is his openness to the truth as he saw it, which he stated his vision. Democracy will always need his kind of artist. Fortunately for Russia he was by no means his last representative.

Alekandr Barilevich Lektorsky, a Russian *Looks at America* (University of Chicago Press, \$15.95) is an account of his journey through America undertaken in 1957, now translated into English for the first time by Arnold Schrier and Joyce Korman. In his foreword Henry Steele Commager writes that Lektorsky "was, for all practical purposes, the first serious and substantial Russian report on America". Lektorsky says that the American people "will have an influence on Europe but will use neither sword nor sword nor fire, nor death and destruction. They will spread their influence by the strength of their inventions, their trade and their industry."

The last of the great shoppers

By Gabriele Annan

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM:
Out Of This Century
396pp. André Deutsch. £7.95.
0 253 97211 0

Peggy Guggenheim was born into the haute jubilee of New York and brought up at the Central Park end of East 72nd Street in a house with a marble staircase, an indoor fountain, plenty of French tapestries and roomfuls of Louis XV and XVI furniture. The family employed a professional shopper who would call with her notebook and write down what was required. Then she proceeded to the shops where she had charge accounts and received ten per cent discount on her purchases. As she invariably bought everything wrong, most of her life was spent in exchanging things. When we shopped for ourselves we did much better and she benefited just the same because we charged everything to her."

Shopping can be a profession, an obsession, an inherited strain, a matter of breeding. In Peggy Guggenheim it was all of these. As a young girl she even shopped on the Day of Atonement and when her mother found out she punished her by refusing to settle the account. At nineteen she came into her fortune; at twenty-two she went to Europe (accompanied by her mother) not to return again for twenty-one years; at twenty-three she married another shopper, an American expatriate artist and writer called Laurence Vail. He was "considered the King of Bohemia" in Paris, but his family were respectable upper-crust. The wedding was in Paris, the honeymoon in London. "I couldn't distinguish one thing from another," Marcel (Duchamp) tried to educate me. . . . To begin with, he taught me the difference between Abstract and Surrealist art. Later she had other advisers: Herbert Read, who helped draw up her first shopping list; Kay Boyle, the widow of the de Stijl artist; Howard Putzel, a New York dealer; André Breton, Alfred Barr, the Director of the New York Museum of Modern Art and his daughter, the greatest Surrealist of them all.

She fell in love with Ernst Peck, because he was so beautiful and such a good painter. In 1941, she helped him to escape to the States where they married, rather against his wishes. The marriage lasted a year and was possibly the worst of all her unions, though when they went to the Grand Canyon, he "found a shop with wonderful Indian masks, totem poles, and Kachina dolls. He wanted to buy them all". With all these allies, Peggy Guggenheim "gradually learned to manage by herself, and in the 'twenties I had become an art addict."

Confessions of an Art Addict is the title of her memoirs published in 1969. Part of it forms the second half of the present book, whereas the first part is a revised version of an earlier *Out Of This Century*, published in 1946: "I seem to have written the first book as an uninitiated woman and the second one as a lady who was trying to establish her place in the history of modern art." The first part is essentially the second half of the book of combining the two. It is a revised version of the work of Jackson Pollock, who "wanted to do a book-seller's book." Nothing came of it because the author was "so much in love with *Out Of This Century*". The original book got published in reviews, some of which are reprinted in the new one. The publishers have replaced all the old pseudonyms, except one, by the real names of the people concerned. They too, perhaps, are hoping for a best-seller, as the men Peggy Guggenheim slept with included many celebrities: Duchamp, Yves Tanguy, Samuel Beckett, and Sir Roland Penrose. A glance at the index may reveal other names, though on the whole the index is not so terribly helpful.

Serious, compassionate, and politically minded readers will be shocked among other things by the author's total disregard for the

many, but Peggy Guggenheim's collection can still compare with them in quality.

After Vail, Peggy Guggenheim's next and most serious affair (and the only one that died a natural death by death) was with an Englishman called John Holmes. Edwin Muir wrote of him: "Holmes gave me a greater feeling of genius than any other man I have met, and I think he must have been one of the most remarkable men of his time, or indeed of any time." Shortly after beginning to live with Peggy Guggenheim he married his former mistress because she wished to be able to eliminate my trivial side. . . . When I first met John, he was a symbol of what all human motives, but worst of all, completely ignorant of myself." When he died "I was in perpetual terror of losing my soul. Every day I looked in the mirror and watched my mouth sag more and more. Then we did much better and she forced was happening to me. I did lose my soul and I knew it. If I found it again, how could I cope with it without John to guard it?" She does not sound trivial at all any more.

The next man was again English, a publisher called Garman; although unmarried they lived a very married sort of life with a lot of children in the English countryside, the children being Sindbad, Pegen, Garman's daughter, and various of his nieces. For three years it was all parties and picnics until Garman's Marxism drove him into the arms of a party member. This left Peggy Guggenheim "rather at a loss for an occupation, since I had never been anything but a wife for the last fifteen years." It was then that modern art came into her life. She decided to start a gallery in London. "I couldn't distinguish one thing from another," Marcel (Duchamp) tried to educate me. . . . To begin with, he taught me the difference between Abstract and Surrealist art. Later she had other advisers: Herbert Read, who helped draw up her first shopping list; Kay Boyle, the widow of the de Stijl artist; Howard Putzel, a New York dealer; André Breton, Alfred Barr, the Director of the New York Museum of Modern Art and his daughter, the greatest Surrealist of them all.

She fell in love with Ernst Peck, because he was so beautiful and such a good painter. In 1941, she helped him to escape to the States where they married, rather against his wishes. The marriage lasted a year and was possibly the worst of all her unions, though when they went to the Grand Canyon, he "found a shop with wonderful Indian masks, totem poles, and Kachina dolls. He wanted to buy them all". With all these allies, Peggy Guggenheim "gradually learned to manage by herself, and in the 'twenties I had become an art addict."

Confessions of an Art Addict is the title of her memoirs published in 1969. Part of it forms the second half of the present book, whereas the first part is a revised version of an earlier *Out Of This Century*, published in 1946: "I seem to have written the first book as an uninitiated woman and the second one as a lady who was trying to establish her place in the history of modern art." The first part is essentially the second half of the book of combining the two. It is a revised version of the work of Jackson Pollock, who "wanted to do a book-seller's book." Nothing came of it because the author was "so much in love with *Out Of This Century*". The original book got published in reviews, some of which are reprinted in the new one. The publishers have replaced all the old pseudonyms, except one, by the real names of the people concerned. They too, perhaps, are hoping for a best-seller, as the men Peggy Guggenheim slept with included many celebrities: Duchamp, Yves Tanguy, Samuel Beckett, and Sir Roland Penrose. A glance at the index may reveal other names, though on the whole the index is not so terribly helpful.

Serious, compassionate, and politically minded readers will be shocked among other things by the author's total disregard for the

Second World War. She is shocked herself:

It is really incomprehensible to think of our world when there was so much art surrounding us. Trains pouring into Paris with refugees in the direst misery and in bodies that had been mauled and ruined on route. I can't imagine why I didn't go to the aid of these unfortunate people, but I just didn't; instead, I drank champagne with Bill.

Even her honesty—or her coolness—in view of the danger she ran as a Jew in public now, any more than in 1946. So it seems rather odd that this old lady—this now elderly, though once a young girl—should have been so much in love with Hitler (Goebbels used the propaganda that even Nixon and the CIA were foreseen by Nostradamus). These extraordinary successes make all the more alarming the supposed prophecies as yet unfulfilled.

Though this strange prophet has been famous in sub-culture for 400 years, in itself an interesting phenomenon, there has been no modern critical edition of the *Prophecies* and no sustained attempt at putting this substantial body of French verse into historical context. The edition of the *Prophecies* and *Enigmas* of Nostradamus by Michel LeVer, now in the hands of the publisher, is a welcome addition to the literature of the occult. Nostradamus, who was an astrologer (not a very good one according to LeVer) seemed a likely person to find favour at court, and to be useful both as astrologer and doctor. He lived on the fringe of court favour though he was not fully accepted until too late. The misfortune of the untimely death of Henri II probably delayed his career.

The reader will derive a good deal of enjoyment from this lively commentary, which unravels the allusions as referring mainly to the events of Nostradamus's own times, and to a great extent to a small place in not a prophecy of Napoleon on Elba but reflects the retirement of the Emperor Charles V, which had occurred not long before the publication of the prophecies. While Nostradamus speaks of "Bretagne", he means Brittany; hence political convulsions in Brittany in the sixteenth century, of the execution of Charles I and other sensational events in British history, are about happenings in France in the sixteenth century. "Hister" is the river Doubs, a bolt shot at "Hiler". The prophecies are almost entirely concerned with sixteenth-century history, with particular reference to the French monarchy and its relations with other contemporary powers. When Nostradamus actually makes a prophecy of something which is to occur in the future, he is nearly always wrong, his most tremendous blunder being the promise of a glorious career for Henri II made shortly before that monarch's unexpected death in a joust.

The double task of providing for the first time a reliable text and translation of Nostradamus's poetry

is a task that needs to be known about her as a collector can be found in her extraordinarily unimpaired introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition, which is often repeated the same as the relevant passages in this book. The book is not straight gossip, but it is reflected in a glided and eccentric eye.

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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

MICHAEL NOSTRADAMUS:
The Prophecies and Enigmas of Nostradamus
Translated and edited by Liberte E. LeVer
257pp. Glen Rock, New Jersey: Firebell Books. \$15.

Nostradamus is a name which belongs to popular culture, to the world of the almanac and sensational forecasting. The main events of European history are supposed to have been prophesied in his riddling verses: the execution of Charles I, the French Revolution, the career of Napoleon, the rise of Hitler (Goebbels used the prophecies in his propaganda). I understand that even Nixon and the CIA were foreseen by Nostradamus. These extraordinary successes make all the more alarming the supposed prophecies as yet unfulfilled.

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The double task of providing for the first time a reliable text and translation of Nostradamus's poetry

Oracle to the Cock of France

By Frances Yates

and of sweeping away the trashy interpretations with which centuries of low-grade exploitation have covered it, has at last unveiled the real Nostradamus and his work. As LeVer says, we have not hitherto known either.

Michel de Nostradamus (1503-1566) was born at Saint Rémy, near Marseille. On both sides of his family he was descended from converted Jews. He always proclaimed his adherence to the Catholic Church, though he did not entirely escape Inquisitorial enquiry. He was founded in Latin at the papal school in Avignon, then trained as a doctor at Montpellier, specializing in the plague. Rabelais was a medical student at Montpellier at the same time as Nostradamus; there is no evidence that these two great men knew one another. Nostradamus's education was evidently rather rich and varied (he always said that he learned to prophesy from his family) and there is no doubt that he was a learned man, the work of a time with the great scholar J. C. Scaliger.

In 1555, Nostradamus published at Lyon the first series of *Les prophéties*, which attracted the attention of the French court. He was summoned to Paris; Catherine de Medici was deeply interested in the occult; Nostradamus, who was an astrologer (not a very good one according to LeVer) seemed a likely person to find favour at court, and to be useful both as astrologer and doctor. He lived on the fringe of court favour though he was not fully accepted until too late. The misfortune of the untimely death of Henri II probably delayed his career.

From the standpoint of his accurately edited text of the *Prophecies* and newly directed examination of it, LeVer arrives at some important discoveries. He reveals Nostradamus, first of all, to have had a good knowledge of vernacular as well as of Latin. His prophecies relate to the sixteenth century, they are by no means popular dogma of the sixteenth century. LeVer analyses the versification closely and uses it to help with the riddles. Nothing that Nostradamus observes, the aura strictly he finds this a guide in deciphering. For example, a worrying character called "Voldrap" disappears when it is noticed that "vol" comes at the end of the first half of a line and "drap" at the beginning of the second half. "Voldrap" was a printer's disregard of the caesura.

Second, LeVer offers a new interpretation of the prophecies in terms of the world in which Nostradamus lived. There were quite enough sensational events in the sixteenth century for prophecies to brood over without filling in with the colourful allusions to Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, or Hitler. LeVer knows his way about in the sixteenth century extremely well, though he wears his historical erudition lightly and wittily. He does

not force interpretations but simply leaves blanks where he cannot understand. He is amusingly aware of the cautious obscurity in which prophets of the Delphic oracle onwards have veiled their meanings. Through the dark sayings of the prophecies he traces events in the French invasions of Italy; the sack of Rome by the imperialists; adventures of well-known personages of the French court; the spread of new heresies from Germany and Switzerland; and the policies, victories, and defeats of the leading powers of the age. . . . The French King, Francis I and his successors; the Republic of Venice; and, of course, the Papacy. Fully alive to political allegory, he gives close attention to the Eagle (the Emperor), the Cock (the King of France), and the Lion (Venice), in their constantly recurring appearances. With shocking disrespect he refers to these noble creatures as "the usual military zoo".

It seems evident (though LeVer does not go into this) that Nostradamus's favourite creature is the Cock of the French monarchy. The crucial prophecy is the one about Henri II which should have made Nostradamus's fortune had it not been for that unlucky joust.

Au chief du monde le grand Chyren (Henri II) sera,
Plus oultre après asymé; craint
Ses bruit & les cleux suprasera,
Et du seul titre victeur fort content.

(At the head of the world shall be the great Chyren. "Plus ultra" [is left] behind. [Great Chyren shall] be loved, feared, dreaded, [Chyren's] fame and renown shall rise above the skies, and with the single title, "Victor" [he shall be] well content.)

As unriddled by LeVer this means that the French King Henri II ("Chyren" is an anagram of "Henric") will be universal monarch, leaving far behind the German Emperor, and claiming for himself the right to vote for the Emperor and claiming for himself the right to vote for the Emperor. The imperial device with its proud motto was very well known in France and was repelled to by the device of Henri II, a crescent moon with the words *Donce totum impleret orbem* (Until the moon [of French monarchy] fills the world).

Nostradamus is moving in the great world of "imperial themes", the themes of universal empire for French monarchy or German Empire, aspirations which lay at the root of the struggles of the age. Both the emperor figures claimed the aura of Roman Empire and the Trojan descent (to which the prophecies often allude). Naturally, Nostradamus weighted his prophecy on the French side.

In what light did Nostradamus

see himself? How did he wish to present himself to his readers? The opening quatrains of the series make an impressive claim to divine inspiration. "Seated alone at night in serious study" he sees a flame appearing "Wand in hand", he performs magical rites and, in fear and trembling "sees the divine splendour". In the following quatrain he sees what sound like visions of a universal monarchy and a weakened papacy, but very obscurely worded. The prophet takes care not to be too explicit. LeVer thinks that Nostradamus does not really believe in all this, but is aiming only at a conventional invocation of the muse. Yet these things were taken very seriously in the sixteenth century. The poet Ronsard made claims to inspiration by divine furor and made prophetic statements about the times. He respected Nostradamus as a prophet.

What Ronsard says about Nostradamus (not quoted by LeVer) is revealing as to how a contemporary poet regarded him. For him Nostradamus is a prophet sent from God to warn France of danger, but these warnings have not been heeded. Ronsard asks whether Nostradamus's enthusiasm is inspired by the Eternal God, or by some good or bad demon or angel. But he has no doubt that the words of this sombre and melancholy prophet are inspired. He has read into the prophecies meanings which might relate to the wide-prophesies of universal religious rule for French monarchy that were the theme of the strange Christian Cabalist, Guillaume Postel, though Nostradamus was a much more hard-headed character than Postel. Yet it seems that contemporaries, like Ronsard, might read Nostradamus's prophecies as prophetic in the Hebrew sense, and relating to the religious destinies of France.

The light-hearted style in which LeVer presents his edition of Nostradamus does not obscure the fact that he has done a serious and original piece of research in excavating this author and his work.

The Royal Tour of France, by Charles IX and Catherine de Medici, Festivals and Entries 1564-6, by Victor E. Graham and W. McAllister Johnson (482pp. University of Toronto Press), describes the tour planned by Catherine de Medici in the hope that the appearance of the young king would reunite discordant elements in the kingdom.

March Books

Non-Fiction

JAMES BARCLAY *A Stroll Through Borneo*

A delightful account of a journey through one of the last remaining wild spots in the world, illustrated with black and white photographs. £6.95

JO ANDERSON *Anchor and Hope*

A celebration of the River Thames and its now departing way of life, rich in wonderful stories exploring the history, its traditions and characters. Illustrated with black and white photographs and line drawings. £7.95

Fiction

CATHERINE GAVIN *How Sleep the Brave*

Following its predecessors, *Traitor's Gate* and *None Dare Call It Treason*, Catherine Gavin completes her great trilogy of the French Resistance during the Second World War. £5.95

NIGEL TRANTER *David the Prince*

The extraordinary story of a king who changed his country, Scotland, probably more than any other. £6.25

JANICE ELLIOTT *Summer People*

From the author of *The Honey Tree*, of which *The Daily Telegraph* said "she strikes most skillfully a nice balance between hilarity and seriousness." £5.95

ELIZABETH DARRELL *The Jade Alliance*

A haunting historical romance which opens in 1905 in Peking with a Russian family who flee the chaos of Revolution for a new life in Hong Kong. £5.95

Hodder & Stoughton

The Phoenix and the Turkey

Something has made the fire fall upwards—pyrolalia at a wooden Pentecost, and focus enough for what we have to say.

The whole of our sitting-room shudders in elm-light. Hands, faces and furniture flame, till we comprehend each other perfectly.

But nothing lasts. The enthused elm-logs crackle like crocodiles. They gust to heaven, bequeathing us powder of death and darkness.

Now can we believe a new prophecy: this out of the ashes will step a bird of ash, the invincible turkey-phoenix

(a beast of the world, to redeem our love), whose bush of feathers, all flushed with greys, will address us on ordinary days?

Christopher Reid

[illegible]

It is all there: Mme de Staël's grief for her father, her dreams of youth and beauty, of acknowledged merit of her country, and of the completely historical detail, and the meeting Souza during the parenthesis at the Arcadian Academy. More dreams and wishes follow. Oswald will not see anyone but Corinne, who is fascinated by his mystery and reticence. She writes him a letter which sets the seal on their intimacy: and they set off together to visit Rome. There follows the long traveller's guide which Mme de Staël, presumably, had in mind

Finally, her looks good, her health is declining, Corinne decides to follow Oswald to Scotland. She arrives to find a ball in progress to celebrate his engagement to Lucy. She watches the dance from the garden as he appears on a balcony with the lights of the ballroom behind him; the brilliant original scene from all latter-day Gothic romance derives. Weaving in and out of Corinne's story is a ring and a letter containing only the words, "Vous êtes libre." She falls in love, goes home, returns to Italy, and dies. Mine of Städl's unpassionate childhoods has her die in the arms of her father, not her lover and daughter. All are heartbroken; little mourns.

Mine of Städl was fond of enacting

"Nursery Rhymes", by Guenda Morgan. The picture is taken from "Shall We Join The Quacks?" Wood Engraving by Women Artists of the Twentieth Century (104pp, with 91 illustrations. Studio One Gallery, 214 Banbury Road, Oxford. £30. 0-9505455 1 1). Edited and introduced by Betty Clark, and prefaced by two short articles on the wood engraving by Betty Clark and Dorothy Braby, this book is a tribute to Wood Engraving by Dorothy Braby—which makes a sharp distinction between wood cutting and wood engraving—the book is in part record of an exhibition held at the Museum of Oxford in October of 1967. Among the other outstanding practitioners of this art are Gertrude and Clara Leighton, Clara Leighton, Gertrude and Clara Leighton. See also the illustration on the front cover.

The Romantic hero is rarely a match for the Romantic heroine, Narbonne and Ribbing, less standard, all the more effective being so self-effacing.

—Mavis Gallant has created a world into whose void it is unnerving to look. No one wants to recognize the limits of freedom, or to understand that tenderness and dependency create illusions of love, or to accept the fragmentation of life. To her work is to be forced to go into the abyss, and the experience is made endurable only by her unwavering gaze.

perence as material for fiction. "Levine is a very good but not a creative writer," said a "Western Star" from "This Is the Best of Us" in his twenties, "but his writing is made of material." But six weeks went by I realized it was that at all. "I didn't know your material was," Mr. Levine said. "It is his own life, his own material, the people and places he knows or used to know. He was born in Canada but a poor immigrant family, he served in the force in the Second World War. Afterwards he went to McGill University and then to England, where he married and settled in a small town. Since then he has been

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viewpoint

ROGER SCRUTON

[illegible]

to the editor

Mr. Osborne has gathered the impression that Rupert Doone, the leader of the Group Theatre, was merely a bully with "silly and pretentious ideas about the theatre." As is now Doone's ideal and character affected Auden's collaboration with him and with the Group he makes an suggestion. But if readers are left with the impression that the collaboration had no other result than Osborne's unamiablely with this part of his subject. Had he invest-

so, for how long does he calculate that they will be in business for him to sell review copies of their books?

TONY HALL
Gordon Fraser, The Gordon Fraser Gallery Limited, Eastcote Road, Bedford MK42 0JX.

L. JONATHAN COHEN is a Fellow The Queen's College, Oxford. books include *The Probable and Possible*, 1977.

BASIL COTTELL's books include *The*

Have I'm afraid, because the quotation combines the reviewed (first sentence) with the reviewer (second sentence) and takes the long noun as reviewer meant to stress the author have no means of knowing. But aside from this small error, the reviewer is very good in general point that diameter follows when an object is to be as unsuitable.

EDNA LONGLEY is the editor of *The*

about, like that of the founder

is not religious or spiritual values in which they adhere in their scramble for social significance. "Some quit the ministry for jobs in teaching or in the welfare services, while other

as "gloomy pessimists"—to use a phrase employed in this context by the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Time will show who is right.

The document to which the page belongs is an unstated prose narrative, written, possibly by the author, related to Brannwulf's cycle of tales about the character Alexander Percy. (His unpublished two-volume *Life of Alexander Percy* was another lot in the sale.) It is satirical, in what the catalogue's notes suggest is an erratic and hence-biddered-for style. The biographical interest: Christie's quote one of its hypocritically

Collier Mason

Collier Macmillan

[illegible]

